

## **Chapter Overview**

This chapter will discuss the policy and procedures for selecting adoptive families for children in Out-of-Home Care.

- 28.1 Adoptive Family Selection Process
- 28.2 Issues in the Selection of Adoptive Family
- 28.3 Preliminary Screening Process
- 28.4 Adoptive Family Selection Committee and Staffing Process
- 28.5 Preparing for the Meeting
- 28.6 Conducting the Staffing
- 28.7 Interviewing Guidelines for Selecting Adoptive Family Resource
- 28.8 Current Foster/Kinship Family is Selected
- 28.9 Adoption With a New Family

### **28.1 Adoptive Family Selection Process**

The adoptive family selection process begins with the Children's Service Worker conducting a search for approved adoptive families. Search activities include contact with local agency or community resources and ACTS vendor subsystem through ZVRS transaction. The worker should use the e-mail system to obtain family assessments for seven (7) to eight (8) approved adoptive families from other counties and regions in the state. Keep in mind, the email may be forwarded on to adoptive families by workers within the Division. The e-mail message should include the following:

Purpose Statement (to be used at the beginning): "The purpose of the information provided below is to briefly introduce you to the child (ren) for whom our agency is recruiting an adoptive placement."

#### **Do Include:**

- At the top of the profile:
  - list separately, Child's first name, date of birth (mo/yr), race and gender. Can add grade in school if necessary
- Within the narrative, be creative, energetic, use descriptive words (see list of descriptive adjectives located in Section 6, Chapter 1, Attachment E of this manual.)
- Use an attention-getting phrase to begin the narrative and draw readers in.
- Include likes, hobbies, interests, what they want (family, life, goals, pets, church)
- Describe the child's personality.
- School – information about the child's educational accomplishments or needs.
- Special issues – contact with siblings, family or past placement providers
- Positive quotes from the child caregiver (don't refer to the "residential" caregiver)
- Quotes from the child describing themselves (i.e. Favorite thing about themselves, etc.)

- Serious medical diagnosis and treatment involved.
- A description of the child's need for a family with particular skills or family configuration (don't limit to a two-parent family if that is not necessary).
- Legal Status
- Add the date updated/completed at the bottom of profile.
- The profile needs to be at least three paragraphs, and 120-150 words. NO more than 1 – 1 ½ pages in length.
- If you have a photo, state it is available upon request.

Ending Statement (to be used at the end):\_ “For more detailed information about **(child's name)** contact **(worker name and phone)**.”

**Do Not Include:**

- Identifying information within the narrative(i.e., child's last name, school's name, city where child resides, parent's names, date and reason the child is in care, and history of abuse/neglect (any significant information may be included in the confidential narrative section).
- Details about failed past placements (any significant information may be included in the confidential narrative section).
- Anything that might be embarrassing to the child. Ask yourself, “Would I feel comfortable showing this to the child, and would it make them uncomfortable?”
- Date of births, age or grades in school as a part of the narrative.

## **28.2 Issues in the Selection of Adoptive Family**

The Division's goal, in fulfilling its commitment to a child who is available for adoption, is to locate and place the child with a family that can best provide permanency for the child. This goal should be achieved within the shortest possible time from entry into out-of-home care and/or the decision that the child is available for adoption. Meeting the child's needs includes basic respect for his emotional, health, educational, and social needs, and integrating the cultural identity and religious background of the child. Families selected must demonstrate in various ways their ability to meet these needs and must have an approved adoptive family assessment.

Related Subject: Section 6, Chapter 3, Resource Family Assessment and Licensing Process.

Missouri statutes also affect the selection decisions of adoptive families. According to Missouri Statute 453.070, RSMo (#7):

"Any adult person or persons over the age of eighteen, who, as foster parent or parents, have cared for a child continuously for a period of nine months or more and bonding has occurred as evidenced by the positive emotional and physical interaction between the foster parent and child, may apply to such authorized agency for the placement of said child with them for the purpose of adoption, if the child is eligible for adoption. The agency and court shall give preference and

first consideration for adoptive placements to foster parents. However, the final determination of the propriety of the said adoption of such foster child shall be within the sole discretion of the court."

The Division implements this requirement when the child is legally available for adoption or when it appears very likely the child will be legally available for adoption by assessing the interest and capacity of the present family to adopt the child. Additionally, it is important to note that neither the Division nor the statute provides a guarantee that the present foster/kinship family will be approved or granted the right to adopt the child in their care. As in any adoption, only the juvenile court has the final authority to approve the adoption of a specific child by a specific family.

The Division, in expressing its responsibility for protection of the child and expertise in the practice of child placement, must make a decision that a specific family will be most likely to best meet the needs of the child. Adoption is different in the sense that the child arrives as a member of the family in a different manner. Thus, placement selection must be a carefully considered decision. To aid in this, a selection committee is used. This process is mandatory for a child being placed with a new family; however it is an optional process for the selection of the current foster/kinship family as the adoptive parent.

In making the selection of an adoptive family, consideration must be given to all of the child's current and future needs. Since adoption is a lifetime commitment for both the family and the child, attention must be given to assessing the many issues involved in meeting the child's needs and the ability of a prospective adoptive family to meet those needs.

In assessing foster/kinship families who currently have the child in care, the Division will assess the following factors:

- The length of time the child has been in the family's care;
- The attachment of the child to the family and the ability of the child to make new attachments;
- The age of the child at placement with the specific family;
- The child's medical, educational, emotional, social, cultural identity and the family's demonstration of meeting these needs as a predictor for successful parenting throughout the child's growth to adulthood;
- The family's understanding of the purpose and meaning of the adoptive relationship;
- The child's desire to be adopted by the specific family;
- The child's acceptance as a member of the immediate family and understanding of the child's role in the extended family;

- The child's assimilation into the family, including the family's ability to encourage and preserve the child's cultural identity and religious background;
- Whether the child has siblings that will need placement with the child;
- The need for continued contact (after adoption) with siblings, other relatives/kin and significant others;
- The family's acceptance of legal risk; and,
- The child's unique parenting needs.

### **28.3 Preliminary Screening Process**

The Children's Service Worker, adoption specialist, supervisor and/or Circuit Manager will screen the assessments according to staffing criteria and select three (3) to four (4) for consideration by the staffing committee.

### **28.4 Adoptive Family Selection Committee and Staffing Process**

The purpose of this committee is to apply a team effort and objective analysis to the practice of selecting a permanent family for a child in Children's Division (CD) custody who is in need of an adoptive placement. Additionally, it recognizes that the child's placement provider and other foster/adoptive families along with professional staff and resources are essential, vital members of this selection process.

Committee Membership - The following persons are mandatory members:

1. Child's Children's Service Worker and his/her supervisor, if applicable;
2. Case manager and his/her supervisor;
3. Adoption specialist and his/her supervisor;
4. Child's placement provider (if placement provider is not an adoptive applicant for the child);

NOTE: The staff representative from a child-caring facility should be that person who has the greatest knowledge/rapport with the child.
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5. Other foster or adoptive parents of special needs children;
6. CASA/GAL;
7. Juvenile officer;

8. Child's counselor, therapist, psychologist, etc.;
9. Community representative;
10. Any other person who has vital significance in the child's life; and
11. Adoptive family workers, if geographically feasible.

NOTE: RE: Conflict of Interest: If a relationship between a member of the team and the person being staffed exists, that member of the team shall be excused from the discussion and selection process.

**The child's placement provider must be invited to the staffing and every possible effort should be made to include them in the staffing decision.** When geographic constraints exist, conference calls are an option. If the placement provider cannot participate in the staffing, staff should request the placement provider review the prospective families and provide recommendations (preferably in writing) as to their first, second and third choices. Again, staff should work hand-in-hand with placement providers to obtain their feedback and participation.

NOTE: If the placement providers have indicated an interest to adopt the child, they are not members of the formal staffing.

The foster or adoptive family appointed to serve as standing members of the committee should be well versed in the philosophy of permanence and achieving the best interests of the child. They should be chosen on the basis of:

- Their skill/knowledge about out-of-home/permanency planning for children;
- Demonstrated ability to successfully foster/adopt special needs children;
- Availability to participate on a regular basis; and
- Ability to effectively participate as a team member.

The representative of the child-caring facility should be the staff member who has the greatest rapport with the child.

The community representative should be one who is interested and knowledgeable about public child welfare services.

Have each non-Division member complete a CS-8, Statement of Confidentiality for Non-CD Members of the Permanency Planning Team.

Before asking the member to complete this form, make pen, ink or typewritten changes (underlined) as follows:

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY FOR NON-CD MEMBERS OF THE ADOPTION STAFFING COMMITTEE.

On becoming a member of the Adoption Staffing Committee, I \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Foster Parents, and Prospective Adoptive Parents

The Children's Service Workers for the prospective families should attend whenever it is geographically feasible. If they are unable to attend, their opinions should be sought about their first, second and third choices. Their participation may be obtained by a variety of techniques such as conference calls, telephone calls during the meeting, etc. If they are unable to participate, their agreement with the committee's deliberations/decisions must be sought before proceeding with placement implementation.

Other members - While the membership is mandatory as is notification of each member of the formal staffing meeting, it is not mandatory that all be in attendance. However, their opinions must be sought and utilized in the staffing discussion. Their participation could be obtained via the use of conference calls, telephone calls during the meeting or by asking them to submit their preferences in writing prior to the meeting. The basic intent is to obtain as much participation as possible from those who have significance in the child's life while recognizing practical issues of busy schedules and geographic constraints.

### **28.5 Preparing for the Meeting**

The Children's Service Worker or adoption specialist will share, in advance, copies of the assessments for the three (3) to four (4) families selected by the screening committee. Attach a cover letter which includes the following information:

1. The meeting time and place;
2. A reminder of the confidentiality of the information about the families and the children;
3. A request that, if they cannot attend, they share their written recommendations; and
4. A request that they return any copied material to the CD office at the time of the meeting or with their written recommendations if they are unable to attend. All written material copied and shared with non-CD members must be returned to the adoption specialist for destruction.

NOTE: If a member is not knowledgeable about the child, a copy of the child's summary should be shared. This should also be returned to CD at the time of the meeting so that it can be destroyed.
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The meeting should be scheduled at least two (2) weeks in advance.

### **28.6 Conducting the Staffing**

Although operating as a team, at least one (1) person must be designated to lead the meeting. Normally this would be the adoption specialist, but it could be the child's worker or case manager. The leader should do the following:

1. Restate the purpose of the meeting, and review and remind the membership of the importance of maintaining confidentiality of the information shared.
2. Begin by presenting information about the child including a recommendation regarding characteristics of the type of family who can best meet the needs of the child. This information should be concise and provide adequate information about the child's needs, behaviors, background, etc. Answer any questions about the information provided.
3. Share information about each prospective family and obtain the recommendations of each team member with the reasons they selected a specific family as their first, second and third choices.
4. Discuss questions and comments to achieve consensus on the first, second and third choices. Voting on the choices should be avoided whenever possible.
5. Make plans to implement the recommendations and obtain the consensus of all mandatory members of the committee.

**NOTE:** If the juvenile judge requires participation in determining the family selected, obtain his/her opinions before proceeding to implement movement toward the adoptive placement.

6. Before adjourning the meeting, obtain all the copies of the adoptive family assessments shared with the membership. Destroy all copies except one set of those considered and retain this set in the child's file.

Although, the committee should reach a decision within one (1) meeting, in unusual circumstances it may be necessary to reconvene another staffing for a specific child to arrive at a final recommendation of the families considered.

**NOTE:** This process should be repeated as often as necessary until the child is placed or the child's case plan no longer is adoption.

### **28.7 Interviewing Guidelines for Selecting Adoptive Family Resource**

Use these guidelines if a staffing committee elects to interview the first, second and third choice families before making a final recommendation regarding the placement choice

for a child. This interview should serve only to enhance the information included in the adoptive assessment and the decision about which family can best meet the needs of the child. Families who are interviewed should understand that there is no negative consequence should they choose not to be interviewed. Families must be given enough information about the child, both positive and negative, and any risks during the interview to make a decision.

Plans should be made to conduct the interviews on the same day if possible. Families should be prepared to bring their own children if this is important to the decision to place a child with a particular family.

Preparation for interview includes:

1. Planning a complete presentation of information about the child using the child's summary as the basic document. At a minimum, the presentation must include the child's legal status and a clear, but concise, description of the child's condition and desires in an adoptive family, and any special requirements established for the child by the child's jurisdictional court. Examples of requirements of the jurisdictional court include the right to make the final selection of the adoptive family or a review of the CD recommendations before allowing the family to know of the final decision.
2. Planning to inform each family about the confidential nature of the information they are given about the child and their responsibility for keeping it confidential.
3. Developing a list of questions, about the child's needs/behaviors, which is to be asked of all families interviewed. Plans should also include some expected responses or some determination of the characteristics or knowledge staff believe the family should have in order to select the most appropriate family.
4. Planning to inform the families of when they will be notified of the selection decision. Consideration should be given to what is involved in making the final decision and approximately how long it will be before the decision is made.

<p><b>NOTE:</b> It must be recognized that most families will be ill at ease and sensitive to the competition with other families. Every effort must be taken to make them comfortable upon their arrival at the office and during the interview.</p>
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The interview includes:

While it is not a mandatory requirement, the presence of the family's worker is encouraged.

The following format should be used in conducting the interview:



- Explain the purpose of the interview.
- Present information about the child.
- Present pre-planned questions.
- Allow the prospective adoptive family to ask questions.
- Provide them with the liberty to talk with their worker and to ask additional questions away from the interview.
- At the end, they should be asked directly whether they continue to be interested in the specific child. Again, explain that there are no negative consequences to their status if they elect not to accept the child.
- Explain when they will be notified of the committee's decision by their worker and any local court protocol involved in the placement decision.

#### **28.8 Current Foster/Kinship Family is Selected**

The case manager/direct Children's Service Worker will:

1. Explain permanent plan to current foster/kinship family including services needed and required legal actions needed to achieve plan.
  - a) Explain that if they are interested in adoption of the child in their care, an adoptive application and assessment will be needed.
  - b) Explain consideration rights if they have had the child for less than nine months.
  - c) Give preferential rights if they have had the child in their care nine months or longer.
  - d) Explain importance of continuing to provide an environment that encourages and preserves the child's cultural identity.
  - e) Advise foster/kinship parent that the court may allow them to present evidence for court consideration if they desire to adopt the foster child in their home who is the subject of a TPR hearing.
  - f) If the family elects not to adopt the child, explain importance of their mandatory participation in the formal adoption staffing.
  - g) Explain that if they wish to adopt the child, at CD's option, a staffing committee will determine if adoption by them is the best plan that can be

recommended to the court. If so, they will not be a member of the staffing committee.

- h) Explain child's right to obtain identifying information about the biological parents at the time the child reaches age 21.

NOTE: The adoptive parent(s) must consent to the release of identifying information regarding the biological parents if the adoption was instituted or completed prior to August 13, 1986.

- i) Explain foster/kinship parent rights to obtain non-identifying information about the biological parent or child after adoption.
- j) Explain child's right to obtain non-identifying information regarding the biological parents and child's siblings, at age 21 and after.
- k) Explain child's right at age 21 to register with the Missouri Adoption Information Registry to permit contact with biological parent

NOTE: Contact will be made by registry staff if a match is made by the registry.

- l) Explain child's right at age 21 or over to make a written request to the court that granted the adoption for identifying information regarding an adult sibling.

NOTE: This information will be released by the court for health purposes only and with the consent of the adult sibling.

2. Confirm family's interest in adoption within seven (7) days of explaining the permanent plan.
  - a) Explain importance of filing adoption petition within 90 days of approval for adoption.
  - b) If not interested or inappropriate, follow procedure 28.9 of this Chapter to select another family to achieve the permanency plan of adoption for the child.
3. If interested, refer family for adoptive application and family assessment to adoption specialist.
4. Within Seven (7) days of the decision that the child is available for adoption, assess and decide appropriateness for and interest of care provider in the adoption of the child.

- For siblings currently separated, adjustments and planning will have to be made for one of the current families to plan for adoption of all.
- 5. Record factors that resulted in the decision that the foster/kinship family is appropriate as an adoptive parent within five (5) working days of decision.
- 6. Obtain assurance that adoption petition has been filed by the family within 90 days of family's approval for adoption.

NOTE: When the petition is filed by the foster/kinship family, the SS-61 must immediately be revised to indicate the child is in an adoptive placement.

- a) Plan for placement of child in an adoptive family if foster/kinship family is not approved for adoption.
- b) Consider adoptive placement plan for child if family has not filed the adoption petition.

NOTE: Although Foster/relative families have the right to indicate their preference to adopt a child in their care, they should not delay in taking action to demonstrate this preference. Assistance should be given in interpreting the child's need for permanency and the child's understanding of time.

- 7. Provide a written, dated summary of child's past and current condition to family within seven (7) days of commitment to adoption (i.e., date CD is notified as to filing of the adoption petition). This must include a synopsis of any professional evaluations and treatment recommendations for the child. (i.e., medical, educational, dental, psychological, psychiatric, etc.)

NOTE: Guidelines for the written summary are located in Section 4, Chapter 27.3 Permanency Through Adoption – Child's Summary for Adoption Placement

NOTE: The information shared must not include anything that would specifically identify natural parents or siblings (not placed together) but may be descriptive of natural parents or siblings. However, when knowledge of siblings (not placed together) is important to a child's adjustment in an adoptive placement, information should be included regarding the identity and whereabouts of the siblings. (This only applies prior to the adoption being finalized or the adoption record being closed.)

- 8. Obtain adoptive parents' signature on summary with date of signature at time it is provided.
- 9. Sign summary at time adoptive parent(s) sign the written summary.

10. Give original copy of summary to adoptive parent(s) and maintain a signed and dated copy in the adoptive parents' case record.
11. Interpret family's responsibility in assisting with the child's understanding of adoption.

NOTE: This includes sharing information about the child's right, at age 21, to obtain identifying or non-identifying information regarding biological parents.

Related Subject: Section 5, Chapter 2.6.6, Adoption Information Registry.

12. Prepare child and family for adoption, including discussion of the following issues:
  - a) Understanding and acceptance of the past;
  - b) Separation from birth family;
  - c) Meaning of and desire for adoption;
  - d) Placement with siblings, if planned;
  - e) Plans to continue to encourage and preserve the child's cultural identity.
13. Assist caretaker with placement support services of social, medical, and legal actions necessary to consummate the adoption.
  - a) Conduct an assessment of the child's physical, emotional and legal needs, if adoption subsidy is to be used.
  - b) Plan for subsequent placement when disruption appears likely.
14. Assess and process child and family's readiness to complete the adoption.

NOTE: Once the Division has committed to adoption by the family, removal of the child can occur only at the family's decision that they do not wish to adopt the child, or the child's emotional and/or physical safety is at risk (i.e., a child abuse and neglect investigation has found "probable cause" and the child is not safe in the home).

15. Prepare child and family for court hearings.
16. Prepare and submit necessary reports to the court for transfer of custody and/or final decree hearings.
17. Interpret confidential nature of adoption to child and family.

- a) Develop plan for visits with siblings after adoption, if it is part of the adoption plan for the child.
  - b) Develop plan for continued parental/kinship contact if the plan is in the best interest of the child.
18. Attend court hearings, being prepared to testify if so ordered.
19. Make one visit with family and child after final decree hearing for purpose of:
- a) Referral to community support groups, if needed;
  - b) Reinforcing the lifetime commitment of adoption;
  - c) Maintaining links to any needed rehabilitation services;
  - d) Completing subsidized agreement, if indicated, and reminding family of yearly review and necessary maintenance activities;
  - e) Planning for continued counseling, if needed; and,
  - f) Assuring that services will be extended if at any time in the future the family or child determine they are in need of services related to the adoption.
20. Record all activities every 30 days.
21. Close case with a recorded termination summary and copy of final decree.
- a) Keep case open if continued services are required, closing case at mutually agreed upon point.
  - b) Copy information needed for the Adoption Subsidy case file, either adding it to the family's existing subsidy file or begin a subsidy case file for the family.
  - c) Maintain subsidy if this service is utilized and record subsidy transactions as needed.

**NOTE:** When providing services other than those relating to the maintenance of an adoption subsidy, the child's status in ACTS should be reported as a closing and reopened in the Protective Services Automated System as a safekeeping case. Those children receiving both post-adoption services and an adoption subsidy remain open cases in ACTS and must be opened or reopened in the Protective Services System.

## 28.9 Adoption With a New Family

Any child in CD custody who is available for adoption and is not being adopted by the current foster/kinship family is available for placement with any approved adoptive family in the state, region, or nation. Selecting a placement resource shall be conducted via the staffing committee process described in this procedure. **Selecting a placement resource shall not be delayed for reasons of the child's cultural identity.**

Whenever possible and practical siblings are placed for adoption together; separate placements may be considered after step 9 through 13 actions have not resulted in a potential resource for the entire group and six (6) months have passed since the children became available for adoption. Exceptions to this policy must be requested through supervisory channels to the Regional Director prior to recommending any home to the juvenile court or embarking on placement planning.

Adoption planning for a child must include a physical, dental (beginning at age three (3) years), and psychological examination (beginning at age five (5) years) within six (6) months prior to the child's placement. Results of these activities shall be included in the required written summary provided to the adoptive parent(s) at the time of placement.

The Case Manager will:

1. Inform child of permanent plan decision. If age appropriate include:
  - a) Information about their right, the legal guardian's right, the child's right at age 21, to request non-identifying information about biological parents from the Division;
  - b) Information about the child's right at age 21 to request identifying information from the court granting the adoption; and,
  - c) Information about child's right at age 21 to register with the Adoption Information Registry.

<p><b>NOTE:</b> Consent of the adoptive parent(s) is required on adoptions instituted or finalized prior to August 13, 1986.</p>
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2. Explore and counsel with the child about the following issues:
  - a) Understanding and acceptance of what has occurred in the past;
  - b) Separation from birth family and present caretaker;
  - c) The meaning of and the child's desire for adoption;

- d) The placement with siblings, if applicable; and,
  - e) Characteristics of possible adopting families including families who may be of dissimilar cultural identity from the child.
3. Refer child to the adoption specialist when adoption becomes the case plan. Include the following information:
- a) Name, birth date, gender and cultural identity;
  - b) Termination of parental rights (TPR) status;
  - c) Status of permission for recruitment;
  - d) Brief description about siblings and whether placement with them is required;
  - e) Brief description of special needs;
  - f) Possible resources already identified (i.e., foster/kinship family, visiting family, etc.); and
  - g) Name of worker, location and telephone number.

Adoption specialist/case manager will:

1. Provide a detailed, written, dated summary of child's base and current condition to family within ten (10) days of referral to the adoption specialist.

NOTE: Guidelines for the written summary are located in Section 4, Chapter 27.3, Permanency Through Adoption – Child's Summary for Adoption Placement.

NOTE: Staff may obtain an evaluation of attachment through HCY or other contracted services, if the child's condition suggests an outside opinion is needed. Staff may also ask the current counselor/therapist to provide this information if they agree they are qualified to do so. Staff may also provide their own observations as well as request foster parents or another type of current caretaker to do so.

NOTE: This summary will be updated later in preparing the required written summary for a specific adoptive placement.

2. Continue developing "life book" with the child, integrating the following:
  - a) Chronology of significant events;

- b) Accumulated memorabilia (pictures, awards, school records, etc.); and
  - c) Birth and medical history.
3. Utilize foster/kinship family in preparing the child for placement via discussion and participation in the following areas:
- a) Feelings toward biological parents;
  - b) Entitlement to a new family;
  - c) Reasons why the child cannot stay with foster parents;
  - d) Giving the child permission to leave the foster family; and,
  - e) Obtaining information about child's behavior patterns, daily routine, and parenting needs.
4. Assist current foster/kinship family to release child as comfortably as possible if they are unable to assist in preparing the child.
5. Outline with foster/kinship family and child necessary pre-placement activities including the:
- a) Selection of an adoptive family;
  - b) Plan for introduction and visiting with the prospective family; and,
  - c) Child's right to participate in the decision to be placed with the family selected.

NOTE: Keep in mind the child does not carry the full burden of the decision.
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6. Conduct a search for an appropriate family using the following resources:
- a) Local agency or community resources;
  - b) ACTS Vendor Subsystem through ZVRS transaction;

NOTE: This search includes approved adoptive families.
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- c) Use e-mail to obtain seven (7) to eight (8) families with an approved adoptive assessment from other counties and regions in the state. Keep in mind, the email may be forwarded on to adoptive families by workers



within the Division. When making the request include the following information in the profile sent by the worker:

Purpose Statement (to be used at the beginning): “The purpose of the information provided below is to briefly introduce you to the child (ren) for whom our agency is recruiting an adoptive placement.”

**Do Include:**

- At the top of the profile:
  - list separately, Child’s first name, date of birth (mo/yr), race and gender. Can add grade in school if necessary
- Within the narrative, be creative, energetic, use descriptive words (see list of descriptive adjectives located in Section 6, Chapter 1, Attachment E of this manual.)
- Use an attention-getting phrase to begin the narrative and draw readers in.
- Include likes, hobbies, interests, what they want (family, life, goals, pets, church)
- Describe the child’s personality.
- School – information about the child’s educational accomplishments or needs.
- Special issues – contact with siblings, family or past placement providers
- Positive quotes from the child caregiver (don’t refer to the “residential” caregiver)
- Quotes from the child describing themselves (i.e. Favorite thing about themselves, etc.)
- Serious medical diagnosis and treatment involved.
- A description of the child’s need for a family with particular skills or family configuration (don’t limit to a two-parent family if that is not necessary).
- Legal Status
- Add the date updated/completed at the bottom of profile.
- The profile needs to be at least three paragraphs, and 120-150 words. NO more than 1 – 1 ½ pages in length.
- If you have a photo, state it is available upon request.

Ending Statement (to be used at the end): “For more detailed information about **(child’s name)** contact **(worker name and phone)**.”

**Do Not Include:**

- Identifying information within the narrative (i.e., child’s last name, school’s name, city where child resides, parent’s names, date and reason the child is in care, and history of abuse/neglect (any significant information may be included in the confidential narrative section).
- Details about failed past placements (any significant information may be included in the confidential narrative section).
- Anything that might be embarrassing to the child. Ask yourself, “Would I feel comfortable showing this to the child, and would it make them uncomfortable?”

- Date of births, age or grades in school as a part of the narrative.
7. Answer all responses to search/e-mail recruitment activities, within five (5) working days, using the following instructions as applicable:
    - a) Submit assessment(s) to requesting county, identifying the sending worker and location. The information should note approval for submittal by the supervisor/Circuit Manager.
    - b) Refer responses to the County Office or other state/private agency consistent with their residence, if responding family requires an adoption study.
    - c) Regularly inform county of jurisdiction of results of recruitment activities.
  8. Screen available resources received to three (3) to four (4) families using the same criteria listed for the staffing conference in step 12 below. Those involved in the screening include:
    - a) Direct Children's Service Worker, if applicable;
    - b) Adoption specialist;
    - c) Children's Service Supervisor I or Circuit Manager; and
    - d) Case manager.
  9. Provide the families that will be staffed, with a copy of the child's summary (with identifying information blacked out – including current foster family and previous placements) at least one week prior to the scheduled staffing.
  10. Convene the staffing committee with at least two (2) weeks advance notice of date, time and location.

<p><b>NOTE:</b> Local juvenile court protocol should be followed in processing the recommendations.</p>
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**All non-Division members of the committee must complete a CS-8, Statement of Confidentiality for Non-CD Members of the Permanency Planning Team, which has the appropriate temporary changes made. Refer to 28.4 of this chapter.**

Membership of Staffing Committee - Mandatory:

- Child's worker and his/her supervisor; if applicable;
- Case manager and his/her supervisor;

- Adoption specialist and his/her supervisor;
- Child's foster parents (if foster family is not an adoptive applicant for the child) or other out-of-home care provider;
- Other foster or adoptive parents of special needs children;
- CASA/GAL;
- Juvenile officer;
- Child's counselor, therapist, psychologist, etc.;
- Community representative;
- Any other person who has vital significance in the child's life; and
- Adoptive family workers, if geographically feasible.

NOTE: The staff representative from the other out-of-home care provider should be that person who has the greatest knowledge of and rapport with the child.

NOTE: RE: Conflict of interest: If a relationship between a member of the team and person being staffed exists, that member of the team shall be excused from the discussion and selection process.

It is recognized that it may not be possible for the family workers to be present because of the distance involved. However, their understanding of each prospective family under consideration is very important to the selection process. Commitment to the final three (3) choices should not be made until those family workers have been consulted. Contact should be made via telephone or e-mail to obtain commitment. It may also be possible to obtain their participation through a conference call.

Whatever method is used, the family workers should be provided with a brief summary of the committee's discussion and decision by the adoption specialist or case manager. Agreement should be obtained that the choices are satisfactory.

11. Conduct staffing conference to select first, second, and third choice families from the three (3) to four (4) selected by the screening committee using the following criteria:

- a) Ability to meet the needs of the child;

- b) Ability to accept the physical, emotional, and mental conditions of child;
- c) Age of child in relationship to age of potential adoptive family;

NOTE: Consideration of age may be discriminatory. However, CD believes that the selected family should be of an age capable of rearing the child to adulthood. If not, before the adoptive placement, plans must be made with the potential adoptive family for immediate and extended family members to take responsibility should the child be without a caretaker before reaching majority age.

- d) Acceptance of legal risk, if applicable;
- e) Acceptance of continued contact with siblings, and significant others when beneficial to the child;
- f) Acceptance of the background of the birth parents;
- g) Commitment to encourage and preserve the child's cultural identity;
- h) Availability of and acceptance of use of community resources required by the child; and,
- i) Acceptance of supervision during adoption process.

NOTE: The staffing committee may elect to interview all families selected. If so, this information is to be shared at the time the families are notified of their consideration.

NOTE: If delays in the child's placement for adoption occur and the six (6) months time allowed for the required medical, dental and psychological evaluations has expired, these evaluations should be repeated as indicated by the child's need or condition, or at the request of selected and accepting prospective adoptive parents.

12. Within five (5) working days, record staffing decision identifying the criteria from step 13 and any other factors used in determining the first, second and third choice families most capable of meeting the range of the child's needs.
13. Continue to conduct recruitment activities if the review of resources indicates no suitable families are available. Recruitment includes:
  - a) Registration with the state/national photo listing service;

Related Subject: Section 6, Chapter 1, Attachment D: Use of the Photo Listing and Section 6, Chapter 1, Attachment E: Media Profile.

- b) Registration with the national exchange when indicated; and
- c) Child specific recruitment through the use of television features and other community resources.

NOTE: Family assessments obtained through this process should be included in the search and family's worker should be notified of their status. In some instances it may be necessary to wait for an adoptive assessment to be completed before selecting a family. The family's worker should also be kept informed of plans for the staffing. In other instances, it is most appropriate and necessary to staff a child when only one family becomes available for an adoptive placement for the child or sibling group.

14. Notify all family workers of staff committee decision, if any were not present.

- If a family's worker was not included at the formal staffing, notification of the committee decision should be delayed until their opinion can be solicited and integrated into the decision.

NOTE: The family's worker should notify the family of the decision reached by the staffing committee.

15. Record primary considerations and staffing conclusion in child and adoptive family records within five (5) days of staffing.

16. Within one day of decision, notify, via e-mail, the Regional Office where family resides. Include the following information:

- a) Name of child and location; and
- b) Name of family selected and county of residence.

17. Present complete information about family to child within seven (7) days of selection of family.

18. Within seven (7) days of selection of family, present complete information about child to family using an updated child's summary. Review this information in depth with the family.

NOTE: Guidelines for the written summary are located in Section 4, Chapter 27.3 Permanency Through Adoption – Child's Summary for Adoption Placement

NOTE: Include the fact that the child's right to identifying and non-identifying information at age 21 has been discussed with the child, if age appropriate.

19. Obtain commitment from family within seven (7) days of presentation, if they wish to pursue adoption of the child.
  - a) Present the information about the child to the second and third family choices, if decision is negative.
  - b) Continue search for new family if none of the above families accept the child.

NOTE: Repeat the staffing process as many times as necessary when a family resource becomes available for a specific child until that child is placed or the goal is no longer adoption.

20. Within five (5) days, develop specifics of pre-placement plan which accommodates the wishes of the child and family, including the following:
  - a) First meeting;
  - b) Additional visits;
  - c) Other relationship building activities; and,
  - d) Filing of adoption petition if licensed as a foster/adoptive family.
21. Implement pre-placement plan, recognizing it may disrupt at any time depending on feelings of family and child.
  - a) Continue search for a new family if pre-placement plan fails.
  - b) Interpret to child reasons for the failed plan.

NOTE: In general, pre-placement plan execution should not take more than six (6) weeks.

22. Inform family of the availability of adoption subsidy, if needed, for the child's care.

NOTE: HDN, Out-of-Home Care IV-E or Title XIX (FFP) may be used, depending on the eligibility of the child placed with the family licensed to provide foster/adoptive care (FA).

23. Decide on the appropriate financial assistance plan using out-of-home care funding sources or adoption subsidy according to procedures related to each of these funding sources.

24. Coordinate financial processing activities with new family, present caretaker, and the court action necessary.
25. Place child with the family after obtaining any required authorization from court.
  - Comply with ICPC and/or ICAMA requirements if applicable.
26. Update the SS-61 and SS-60 to reflect the correct type of adoptive placement and financial assistance.
27. Within seven (7) days of placement, provide an updated written and dated summary of the child's past and current condition to the adoptive family.

<p>NOTE: Guidelines for the written summary are located in Section 4, Chapter 27.3, Permanency Through Adoption – Child's Summary for Adoption Placement</p>
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- Provide written non-identifying information on birth parents' reasons for voluntary relinquishment, if applicable.

The child's summary that was written at the time of the referral to the Adoption Specialist should be used as a guide for material which must be summarized and included in the written summary. This summary should reflect all information that has previously been given to the family and shall include a synopsis of any professional evaluations of and treatment recommendations for the child (i.e., medical, educational, dental, psychological, psychiatric, etc.).

The information shared must not include any that would specifically identify the birth parents or siblings (not placed together), but may include a general description of the birth parents or siblings. However, when knowledge of siblings (not placed together) is important to a child's adjustment, information regarding the siblings' identity and whereabouts should be included. (This only applies prior to the adoption being finalized and the adoption record being closed.)

28. Obtain adoptive parents' signature and date of signature on summary when it is provided.
29. Sign and date summary at the time summary is provided.
30. Give the original copy of the summary to adoptive parents and maintain a copy in the adoptive parents' case record.
31. Review with the family and child, if age appropriate, any concerns and issues that have evolved during pre-placement activities.

32. Outline with the family and child the sequence of activities of placement support services.

- Prepare the family and child for the transfer of custody hearing if this has not already occurred.

NOTE: Removal of the child after placement can only occur at the family's decision not to adopt the child, or because the child's emotional and/or physical safety is at risk (i.e., a child abuse and neglect investigation has found "probable cause" and the child is not safe in the home).

33. Record all activities every 30 days.

34. Transfer record, which includes a transfer summary, within ten (10) working days of placement, as appropriate, to county that is to provide adoptive placement support services.

- a) Plan with other state for adoptive placement support services including regular reports of service progress.
- b) Do not transfer record if placement is in another state or if another in-state agency will be providing placement support services. A summary of the child's history and current condition and status should have been shared previously.

MEMORANDA HISTORY: CD04-73